DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 144 481 HE 009 269

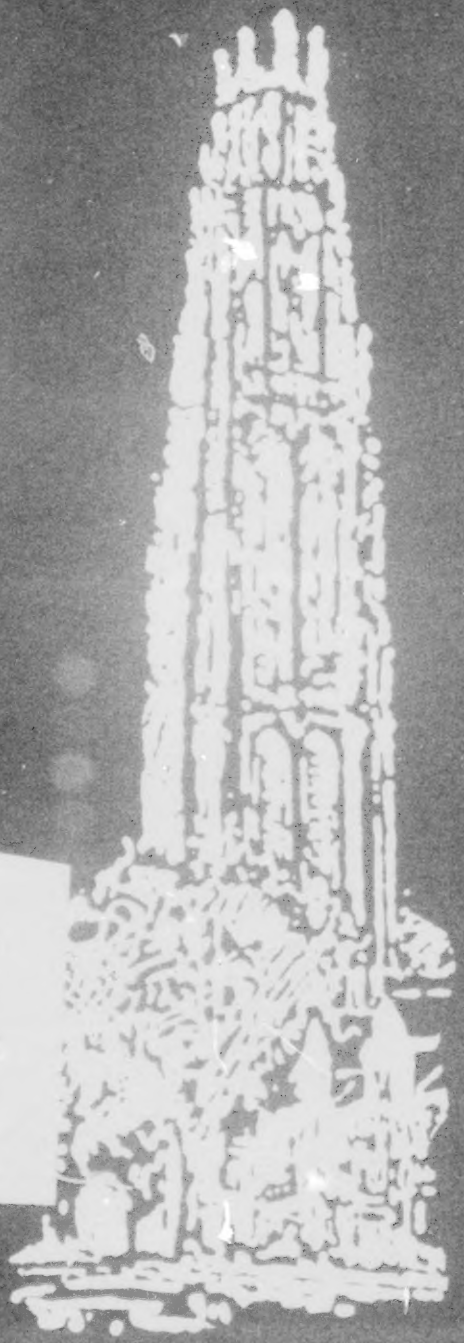
AUTHOR	Hall, Peter Dobkin
TITLE	Medicine, Politics, and Higher Education, 1777-1813: The Prehistory of the Yale Medical School. Yale Higher Education Program Working Paper.
INSTITUTION	Yale Univ., New Haven, Conn. Inst. for Social and Policy Studies.
SPONS AGENCY	Lilly Endowment, Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.
REPORT NO	YHEP-6
PUB DATE	May 76
NOTE	69p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Program of Comparative and Historical Studies of Higher Education, Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Yale University, 1732 Yale Station, New Haven, Conn. 06520
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$3.50 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Educational Accountability; *Educational History; *Higher Education; *Medical Education; *Organizational Change; Social Influences; United States History; *Universities
IDENTIFIERS	*Yale University CT

ABSTRACT

The location of medical teaching in the university presents an interesting problem for historians of medicine and higher education. Because the training of physicians has been included among the tasks of the university for so long and because medicine was the first of the professions to organize itself, scholars have tended to view the linkage of one to the other as inevitable. They have, as a result, left unexamined the forces that brought the combination about, and have passed over the opportunity to study two important and interrelated phenomena: the expansion of the early American colleges into universities, and the transformation of medicine from a craft to a professionally organized scientific discipline. Neither of these phenomena can, in the context of early American history, be subject to simple, unitary, comprehensive explanations. Underlying institutional changes that appear very similar are motives and constituencies that are very dissimilar. The university grew out of older institutions in a piecemeal fashion, according to the diverse needs of administrators, trustees, and faculty, and their constituencies within and without the walls of the institutions. The result was a unique product: a comprehensive educational organization governed by laymen, supported by private benevolence, and having little or no direct accountability to the general public or to the state. (Author/MSE)

Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original.

ED144481



HE009269

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Phyllis R. Cook

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

Institution for
Social and Policy Studies

YALE UNIVERSITY
New Haven, Conn. 06520

MEDICINE, POLITICS, AND HIGHER EDUCATION, 1777-1813: THE PREHISTORY OF THE YALE MEDICAL SCHOOL

by

Peter Dobkin Hall*

YALE HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM
WORKING PAPER

YHEP-6

May 1976

*Peter Dobkin Hall
Postdoctoral Fellow of the Program of
Comparative and Historical Studies of
Higher Education, and Assistant Professor
of History at Wesleyan University

The research reported in this paper has been part of the Yale Higher Education Program. It has been supported by an ISPS Postdoctoral Fellowship (1975-76) and by research funds granted to Burton R. Clark by the Lilly Endowment for the comparative study of academic organization and governance.

In the interest of fullest possible circulation of information and ideas, the Institution for Social and Policy Studies reproduces and distributes these Working Papers at the request of authors who are affiliated with the ISPS. They are not edited or reviewed, and the views in them are those of their authors.

Content of this Working Paper is not for publication or for quotation without permission. A list of the Working Papers of the Program may be obtained from the address below.

Program of Comparative and Historical
Studies of Higher Education
Institution for Social and Policy Studies
Yale University
135 Prospect Street
New Haven, Connecticut 06520

MEDICINE, POLITICS, AND HIGHER EDUCATION, 1777-1813:
THE PREHISTORY OF THE YALE MEDICAL SCHOOL

The location of medical teaching in the university presents an interesting problem for historians of medicine and higher education. Because the training of physicians has been included among the tasks of the university for so long and because medicine was the first of the professions to organize itself, scholars have tended to view the linkage of the one to the other as inevitable. They have, as a result, left unexamined the forces and personalities that brought the combination about. By so doing, they have passed over a unique opportunity to study two important and interrelated phenomena: 1) the expansion of the early American colleges into universities; 2) the transformation of medicine from a craft to a professionally organized scientific discipline.

That medical education should have ended up in the university was not inevitable. In the late eighteenth century, when pressures to reorganize medical training first began to manifest themselves in America, physicians had a number of organizational alternatives that they might have followed. Most accessible was that of the Mother Country, England, where physicians were trained in the great city hospitals of London--the universities having no role in either training or certification.[1] Since both training and licensing were under the control of the physicians themselves organized into guilds and

---

[1] Richard Shryock, Medical Licensing in America, 1650-1965 (Baltimore: 1967), 10.

colleges, the English system resembled the American system of apprenticeship training to a significant extent. It is curious, therefore, that American doctors rejected it in favor of the university-centered model followed in Scotland and on the Continent.[2] In following this model, which placed the control of medical institutions in the hands of non-physicians, the profession was bound to compromise its exclusive jurisdiction over its own affairs.

If the willingness of physicians to sacrifice their autonomy to the universities is curious, the preeminence of medical training over both divinity and law is more so. In every major American university of the late eighteenth century, the establishment of medical curricula preceeded the setting up of comparable degree-granting programs in law and divinity by decades. Harvard, which began granting medical degrees on examination in 1788, did not grant similar until 1817 in divinity and 1820 in the law.[3] Yale, which instituted its medical school in 1813, did not establish comparable programs in law or divinity until 1843 and 1867, respectively.[4] Columbia's medical school, founded in 1769, antedated its law school by ninety years.[5] And the medical school at the University of Pennsylvania, founded in 1765,

---

[2] Ibid., 9; E. P. Cheney, History of the University of Pennsylvania, 1740-1940 (Philadelphia: 1940), 99.

[3] Harvard University, Quinquennial Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates 1636-1930 (Cambridge: 1930), 851, 1113, 970.

[4] Yale University, Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates of Yale University 1701-1924 (New Haven: 1924), 486, 506, 543.

[5] Columbia University, Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates of Columbia University (New York: 1906), 195, 351.

would not be joined by other courses of professional training for another 85 years.[6] Even institutions like Dartmouth and Bowdoin, which never were completely transformed into universities, boasted medical schools of high reputation in the early years of the nineteenth century.[7] Only Princeton and Brown of the major eighteenth century colleges of the northeast avoided involvement with professional education altogether until the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[8] It is obvious that, for the major collegiate institutions of the late eighteenth century, medical education was the first step beyond the traditional mission of generalized undergraduate education.

It is difficult to understand the readiness with which the colleges of the late eighteenth century initiated medical curricula. Although in the process of professional organization and reform, medicine was a low-status profession--far less prestigious than the law or the ministry.[9] Why the colleges should have been willing to associate themselves with a discipline of questionable character is as

---

[6] Shryock, op. cit., 16; E. P. Cheney, op. cit., 233-237.

[7] Dartmouth College, General Catalogue of Dartmouth College and the Associated Schools (Hanover: 1925), 615. Dartmouth established its medical school in 1797 and granted its first degree on examination in 1798. Bowdoin College, General Catalogue of Bowdoin College, 1794-1912 (Brunswick: 1912), 317. Bowdoin graduated its first class of physicians in 1821.

[8] Brown began giving graduate degrees in 1888: Brown University, Historical Catalogue of Brown University (Providence: 1950), 700. Princeton began giving graduate degrees in the late 1870s: Princeton University, General Catalogue of Princeton University 1746-1906 (Princeton: 1908), 347, 362, 373.

[9] Shryock, op. cit., 4; Joseph Kett, The Formation of the American Medical Profession: The Role of Institutions, 1780-1860 (New Haven: 1968), 1-31.

puzzling as their willingness to enter into the task of vocational training in preference to the higher branches of learning. Furthermore, the medical profession was a center of the forces of secularization and infidelity so much feared by the clergymen who ran the colleges of the late eighteenth century. Many of the leading physicians of the day, Benjamin Gale, Lemuel Hopkins, and Jared Potter of Connecticut, and Benjamin Waterhouse of Boston, were known as scoffers at established religious doctrines.[10] Finally, it seems curious that the American colleges should have been willing to follow the Scottish and Continental model of medical education rather than the English one considering the Anglophilia of most eduated persons in the northeast after 1789.[11] This Anglophilia was particularly strong

---

[10] For dissenters among the physicians of Connecticut, see Herbert Thoms, The Doctors Jared of Connecticut (New Haven: 1958), 28-29; Henry Bronson, "Medical History and Biography" in Papers of the New Haven Historical Society (New Haven: 1876) II, 92; James Thacher, American Medical Biography (New Milford: 1967), 267-68, 298-304.

[11] For an accurate but amusing evocation of New England-Federalist attitudes towards the French and Continentals generally, see Timothy Dwight, Travels in New England and New York (New Haven: 1822) IV, 374. In comparing the English and French deists, he writes: "Formed in the English school of philosophy, where good sense and sound logic has always supported their reputation, it retained, insidious and illusory as it was, so much of the appearance of the appearance of reasoning, as to present something, which could be understood, and which, therefore, could be answered." Of the French, on the other hand, he wrote: "It was a system of abstract declarations, which violated common sense, delivered in an abstract style, equally violating all just taste, and sober criticism. It is not designed to instruct, or convince, but to amuse, perplex, and beguile. It is addressed, not to the men of learning and understanding...but to the ignorant, unthinking, and vulgar. It is directed, not to the understanding even of these; but to their weaknesses, prejudices, and passions.

in the realm of institution-building: the private libraries like the Boston Atheneum were modelled on those of Manchester and Liverpool; the legal basis of most private cultural institutions, the endowment trust, was transposed from English legal doctrines and practices.[12] That a non-English model should have been followed in the case of medical institutions--and, subsequently in the whole range of professional training--needs to be examined and explained.

This phenomenon cannot be explained by making reference to pervasive cultural or ideological forces. Even if one grants that the advancement of science and the consequent organization of medical schools was in some sense inevitable, such a premise does not require the conjunction of medical education with the traditional tasks of undergraduate education in the colleges of the early Republic. Nor can the well-known efforts of physicians to upgrade their standards, professional status, and economic position through professional organization be cited as the sole cause. For if physicians as a group were as ill-organized and déclassé as their own statements and subsequent studies have suggested, their ability to cause a major shift in the policies of well-established collegiate institutions must be doubted. In any case, the absence of physicians from the governing

---

[12] On the influence of English models on American institutions of the early nineteenth century, see Ronald Story, Cultural Institutions and Class Development in Boston, 1800-1870, unpublished dissertation (SUNY at Stony Brook: 1973). On the origins of American charitable endowments, see Peter Dobkin Hall, Family Structure and Class Consolidation Among the Boston Brahmins, unpublished dissertation (SUNY at Stony Brook: 1973).

boards of Harvard, Yale, and Columbia, during the periods in which those institutions initiated their medical courses suggests that whatever influence they may have had was indirect.[13] Ultimately, the most satisfactory explanation will have to be derived from case studies of the origins of medical schools in particular colleges. Attention will have to be devoted to how decisions were made in the colleges, who made them, and the reasons why decision-makers might have been interested in medical education and how physicians, in their efforts at professional reform, might have influenced them.

Samuel Eliot Morison, in explaining the origins of the medical school at Harvard, follows this approach. While making reference to the interest of physicians in the establishment of the school, he suggests that the primary cause lay with the scientific interests of President Joseph Willard and his mercantile friends from Essex County:[14]

> Beverly was then the residence of several active and public spirited merchants (Cabots, Danes, Lees, and Thorndikes), whose love for Parson Willard followed him to Cambridge, and enriched the College... Clerical interest in science may astonish those brought up on the 'warfare between Science and Theology' thesis;

---

[13] An indication of the absence of physicians influence is the lengthy gap between the first admission of laymen to the governing boards of Harvard and Yale and the first elections of medical men. While the Harvard Fellows had been dominated by merchants and lawyers since the first decade of the nineteenth century, no physician was elected until 1852. Yale, which first admitted laymen to the Corporation in 1871, did not coopt a physician until 1919. Even Columbia did not have a physician-trustee until 1770--after having graduated its first aescupalians.

[14] S. E. Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard (Cambridge: 1964), 165-66.

> but it has always been common among Harvard-trained parsons. Those of Willard's generation, were determined to improve the American Revolution for spiritual, scientific, and educational ends.... Immediately following the peace new schools and colleges sprang up in both Southern and Northern States. The little group of Essex County intelligensia to which Willard belonged even gained knowledge from privateering! A Salem corsair brought into harbor the library of Dr. Richard Kirwan, the eminent Irish scientist; Willard and his friends bought it at the prize auction and placed it in the Salem library where they, and many others,....browsed upon scientific literature and the transactions of learned societies.

The scientific interests of Harvard's new president and his mercantile friends was, unquestionably, an expression of the spirit of the Enlightenment--a broad intellectual movement. But it was more than that--inasmuch as persons like Willard's friends, whose business was sailing the seas, could hardly be indifferent to mathematical and astronomical studies with their practical applications to sea-borne commerce.

That Joseph Willard and his friends, who were becoming the dominant force in the affairs of the state and Harvard College, should have favored the introduction of the natural sciences into the curriculum is not, given Morison's account, surprising. It does not, however, explain why they should have fostered the establishment of a medical school. What did the merchants and scientifically oriented officers of Harvard College have to gain from such an institution? There are at least two distinct types of benefit that they might have derived, one more obvious than the other.

The first had simply to do with institutional economics and prestige. Both Columbia and Pennsylvania had had medical schools

since the 1760s. Harvard, always sensitive to its position as the first college in the colonies, wanted one too. More practically, tuitions and fees were what kept the under-endowed institutions of the early Republic afloat financially. A medical school would not only attract students who had, hitherto, given their money to physician-teachers in the apprenticeship system. It would also attract the students who had been spending their funds for medical education in schools in New York and Philadelphia. This would be good for Harvard as an institution.

Analysis of patterns of career-choice, marriage, testation, and institutional support and participation among Willard's mercantile supporters suggests more profound motives.[15] These merchants, who would ultimately become the commercial and cultural leaders of Boston, were, at this point, initiating a transformation of their business activities, separating them from familial concerns of kin-support, altering the traditional unspecialized family-partnerships into specialized, corporate, for-profit ventures. This transformation required an alteration in traditional patterns of career-choice. Rather than taking all of their sons into family businesses, the merchants began to direct some of them into the professions. This diversion of manpower had two important consequences. First, it allowed them to substitute criteria of competence for kinship in

---

[15] Peter Dobkin Hall, "Marital Selection and Business in Massachusetts Merchant Families, 1700-1900", in Rose L. Coser, ed., The Family: Its Structure and Functions, Second Edition (New York: 1975), 226-240. See also Hall, op. cit., 112-194.

filling positions in their businesses. Secondly, directing sons into the professions permitted a concentration of capital in the hands of family members who were the most commercially active and successful. For the capital invested in the careers of sons who became physicians and attorneys would certainly be less than the amount needed for sons who became merchants. A professional's stock-in-trade is his expertise; a merchant's is his access to capital.

As this example suggests, the origins of medical education at Harvard are complex. They involve an interaction of a pro-scientific ideology, efforts to make Harvard competitive with other institutions, the mercantile desire to create vocational alternatives for their sons, and attempts by the medical profession to upgrade its status and improve its economic position.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the factors leading to the establishment of a medical school at Harvard were the same ones in operation at other institutions. American culture in the late eighteenth century was fragmented. Indeed, it is more meaningful to speak in terms of a plurality of cultures in this period, each fairly localized, each dominated by its own fairly insular cultural and economic leadership.[16] Given this, it would be grossly misleading to

---

[16] Close reading of such classics as F. B. Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House (New York: 1963) or the genealogies of major families in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, underlines the local nature of these urban cultures. While they were aware of activities in other places, their response to that awareness was based not on imitation alone, but on local needs. There was, moreover, very little intermarriage between the leading families of one city and those of others until the middle of the nineteenth century.

suppose that forces leading to the formation of medical schools in one city or one college were necessarily identical to those leading to similar developments in other places.

The purpose of this essay is to trace out and analyze the origins of medical education at Yale College. It was an institution noted for its political and academic conservatism, standing apart from and self-consciously resisting the forces of "rational religion"--deism and arminianism--so prevalent in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston.[17] No college could have been less likely to change its form and mission simply in imitation of other institutions. Nor could any institution have been more resistant to the Enlightenment spirit with its secularized adulation of science, progress, and democratic political processes. Nonetheless, Yale had established a medical school by 1811. Examination of this extreme case should illuminate the whole question of how new organizational forms were propagated, of the relation between imitation and the particular needs of local elites in the plurality of cultures of the early nineteenth century, and, ultimately, of the relation between the transformation of the medical profession and the origins of the modern university in America.

The standard accounts of the pre-history of the Yale Medical School cite two sources for the innovation: 1) the Connecticut Medical

---

[17] Yale was unquestionably the most conservative of American colleges. Its major contribution to American education in the nineteenth century was the famous Yale Report of 1828, a defense of the classical curriculum and a denunciation of the introduction of vocational and practical courses into the undergraduate curriculum. See Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith, American Higher Education, A Documentary History (Chicago and London: 1961), volume I, 275-291.

Society, incorporated in 1792; and Ezra Stiles' 1777 memorandum entitled "A Plan of a University."[18] While all cite the importance of the physicians' struggles for professional organization, there is general agreement on the preeminence of Stiles' "Plan" as the first indication that Yale might enter the field of medical education.

The "Plan of a University" set forth a scheme under which the College would expand beyond its classical curriculum to include courses in law, medicine, chemistry, natural history, Hebrew, Oriental languages, and belles-lettres.[19] Stiles' inability to implement this plan is generally attributed to Yale's financial prostration in the decades following the Revolution and the unwillingness of the legislature to provide funds for the enterprise.[20]

The standard sources agree that even if Yale lacked the means to transform itself into a university, it did not lack the will. Burr states that the[21]

> . . . closing decades of the 18th century were filled with post-war conflict and confusion yet, during this time, the leaders in the affairs of the College sought strenuously to plan for the future and President Dwight, drawing inspiration from his predecessor, worked hard at the establishment of a Medical Institution in Yale College.

---

[18] There are three contemporary standard accounts of the origins of the Yale Medical School: Herbert Thoms, The Doctors of Yale College, 1702-1815 (Hamden: 1960); Harold S. Burr, "The Connecticut State Medical Society and the Medical Institution of Yale College" in Herbert Thoms, ed., The Heritage of Connecticut Medicine (New Haven: 1942); and relevant portions of Brooks Mather Kelley's Yale: A History (New Haven: 1974).

[19] Ezra Stiles, Plan of a University, A Proposal Addressed to the Corporation of Yale College, 3 December 1777 (New Haven: 1953).

[20] Burr, op. cit., 26; Thoms, op. cit., 108; Kelley, op. cit., 94-95.

[21] Burr, op. cit., 26.

Thoms claims that Timothy Dwight, Stiles' successor, from his inauguration in 1795, "had in mind the development of the College along the lines projected in his predecessor's Plan of a University."[22] Kelley is more careful, merely suggesting that[23]

> Stiles brought the tolerance, broadmindedness, and intellectual curiosity that gave Yale a university spirit, while Dwight, whose mind, as a later observer noted, 'was closed as tight as his study windows in January,' brought an administrative talent that Stiles had always lacked.

All agree, in effect, that it was only Yale's poverty that prevented it from transforming itself into a university and that Stiles' Plan was a symptom of a broader and more pervasive "university spirit."

The second major event signalling Yale's interest in medical education came in 1806 when Rev. Nathan Strong of Hartford introduced into the Corporation a resolution calling for the establishment of a medical professorship.[24] The resolution was approved and a committee was formed to make contact with the Connecticut Medical Society to discuss the idea. The Society responded in May of 1807 by appointing its own committee on "the proposed union with Yale College."[25]

The two committees met jointly under the chairmanship of President Dwight. They drafted a report embodying "Articles of Union" which were presented to the Medical Society's annual general convention in May of 1808. Submitted to the whole membership, the Articles

---

[22] Thoms, op. cit., 15.

[23] Kelley, op. cit., 139.

[24] Ibid., 132; Burr, op. cit., 27; Thoms, op. cit., 115.

[25] Connecticut Medical Society, Proceedings 20, 21 May 1807 (Hartford: 1884), 133.

were approved by October of 1808. But,[26]

> . . . for a reason never disclosed, the report of the Society's vote did not come before the Corporation for some time, the Society's members being informed later that 'through some neglect or inadvertance' they were not laid before the Corporation.

Yale sat on the articles for two years. It did not approve them until the Fall of 1810. Finally, once the College acted on the matter, another joint committee was appointed to bring the matter before the legislature for an act of incorporation. The petition was granted in October of 1810 and the Medical Institution opened its doors the following year.

These accounts, while generally correct in the facts that they report, raise more questions than they answer. First, they all assume that because individuals connected with Yale had expressed an interest in medical education as early as 1777 that the College had a continuing interest in the matter and was only prevented by circumstances--poverty or lack of administrative talent--from actually establishing a medical school. But the twenty-nine year gap between Ezra Stiles' Plan of a University and Nathan Strong's proposed medical professorship cannot be explained away that easily. Although Yale failed in its efforts to obtain state aid in 1777-78, it succeeded in 1792, while Stiles was still president. Surely if Stiles' interest in creating a medical curriculum had been as compelling as the standard accounts suggest, a medical school could have been established then. But it was not. The

---

[26] Thoms, op. cit., 116; Burr, op. cit., 28.

matter was not even mentioned. Indeed, Stiles' interest in medicine was so slight that he failed to note in his Literary Diary that the same legislative session that granted Yale aid also chartered the Connecticut Medical Society.[27]

A second problem in the standard accounts involves their failure to explain the two-year gap between the Medical Society's favorable vote on the Articles of Union in October, 1808 and the Yale Corporation's action on them in October of 1810. To attribute the delay to "some neglect or inadvertance" is unconvincing. For the matter had, from its earliest stages, been pursued under the direct guidance of President Dwight and the Prudential Committee of the College. Having gone to great lengths to obtain the approval of the Medical Society on the plan of creating a medical school, it is very hard to believe that the College simply forgot the matter for two years.

Finally, if the standard accounts are correct in attributing Yale's twenty-nine year delay in founding a medical school to a lack of financial resources, it is difficult to understand why the school came to be founded during the period 1806-1811. Not only was there no prospect of additional state aid for the project during this period, but, from the imposition of the Embargo by President Jefferson in 1807, New England in general and Connecticut in particular experienced a catastrophic depression. Not until 1814, three years after the

---

[27] The omission is surprising for a number of reasons. First, the Medical Society was the first corporation to receive a charter from the Connecticut legislature since Yale had been chartered in 1701. Secondly, one of the incorporator's and its first president (elected in October of 1792) was Stiles' brother-in-law, Leverett Hubbard.

Medical Institution had begun to operate, would the College receive a state grant for its support--a $30,000 bonus on the chartering of the Phoenix Bank of Hartford.[28] It seems clear that lack of means had little to do with Yale's decision to establish the school when it did. And the influence of Stiles' Plan seems to have been slight--if it had any influence at all.

Benjamin Silliman's "Origins and Progress of Chemistry, Mineralogy, and Geology in Yale College," the only surviving account of a participant in the negotiations leading to the formation of the Medical Institution, renders the standard accounts even more problematic. Contrary to the assertions of Burr, Thoms, and Kelley, who suggest that Yale's proposed medical school was enthusiastically accepted by the Connecticut Medical Society, Silliman's account indicates that there was substantial opposition to the idea:[29]

> It is not my purpose to give a history of this department but I must make some mention of it on account of my own connection with it. Rev. Nathan Strong of Hartford then a member of the Corporation of the College, introduced in 1806, a resolution for establishing a Medical Professorship in the College and I had the honor of being named with him as a committee to examine and report and to devise means for effecting the object. There was a general Medical Society for the State and there were local Societies for the counties and to the last named belonged the duty of examining and licensing candidates for practice.
>
> At first there was jealousy of the College and it was necessary to conciliate. I omit the mention of many

---

[28] Ebenezer Baldwin, Annals of Yale College in New Haven, Connecticut, From Its Foundation, to the Year 1831 (New Haven: 1831), 316.

[29] Benjamin Silliman, "Origins and Progress of Chemistry, Minerology, and Geology in Yale College," Vol. IV, 61-64, Silliman Family Papers, Yale University Archives.

> intermediate steps and come at once to the important measure--the appointment of a committee of conference and consultation--an equal number being appointed by the Medical Society and by the Corporation of the College.
>
> President Dwight was at the head of the College Committee of which I was a member.
>
> Doctor Woodward the elder led the Medical Committee of which Dr. Eli Ives was a member.
>
> The Joint Committee met in my chambers in the Lyceum. The prejudices with which some of the medical men appeared to have come were removed and harmonious action ensued. A fear, however, was expressed by the medical men lest indigent but meritorious young men should be excluded from the proposed Institution on account of inability to pay the fees of the professors.
>
> It was expected, of course, that my department would be engrafted into the proposed Medical Institution. I could not therefore remain silent and I made at once the following proposition--namely:
>
> That one medical student from each county recommended by the Medical Society be admitted gratis to the lectures, eight persons in all--they being selected for their intelligence, worth, and poverty.
>
> This proposition gave satisfaction and removed the objection. . . .

It is most curious that Connecticut physicians should have opposed the Medical Institution--whether out of jealousy and prejudice of Yale or because they feared that poor but worthy candidates would be excluded. After all, they had everything to gain from a medical school. The profession would be raised in prestige by its connection to the state's only institution of higher education. The problem of the excess of physicians in the state would be reduced, which would benefit the doctors financially. They would not even suffer by a loss of income from teaching apprentices since, as the

initial arrangement between the Institution and the Medical Society was worked out, students would still be required to supplement their course of lectures at Yale by clinical training under some established practitioner.[30] Two things seem clear. First, that the physicians of Connecticut played a negative role in the creation of the medical school. The real impetus came from Yale--and the physicians had to be pursuaded, cajoled, and conciliated into the venture. Second, that the physicians' opposition to the Medical Institution was based neither on medical nor on economic grounds--but on a set of fears, prejudices, and jealousies that Silliman, writing forty years after the founding, chose not to mention.

What was going on at Yale in 1806 that made the College suddenly interested in creating a medical school? It seems apparent that it had little to do with any desire on the part of President Dwight to fulfill Ezra Stiles' Plan of a University. It was not with any hope of financial support from the state or from individuals to assist the venture. Nor was it in response to demands from the public or from Connecticut physicians for such a school. This paper will suggest that the answer lies in the tumultuous politics of the period 1790-1810 and in the intersection of Yale and the Connecticut Medical Society with those powerful political forces.

Although superficially similar, decision making at colonial Harvard and Yale was very different than it would be in later periods.

---

[30] Burr, op. cit., 28; Thoms, op. cit., 117; Baldwin, op. cit., 177.

True--the colleges were corporate bodies with ultimate authority residing in boards of fellows, trustees or overseers--as is the case today. That all these decision makers were ministers was not the factor that gave academic policymaking its distinctive character. What made the difference was the ecclesiastical polity: the fact that the clergy, rather than representing voluntary bodies of believers, were officers of a state church to which all citizens were required to belong, which all citizens were required to support, and which, to a very significant degree, controlled access to the franchise and to political office. Policymaking in the colleges, therefore, involved not only the concerns of the institution, but far broader and more compelling political and ecclesiastical considerations. In order to understand the motives underlying the decisions of Yale and Harvard to expand their functions from undergraduate education to professional training--and to medical education in particular--it is necessary to understand the relation of questions of ecclesiastical and political power to educational and professional issues. For, given the position of the minister-trustees as officers of state churches, major decisions about institutional form and function were necessarily made with reference to their broader consequences. Indeed, this essay will attempt to show that, in Connecticut, there was a direct relation between political threats to the established church and its ministry and effort by the clergy to expand the scope of activity in Yale College.

Although Harvard and Yale were rooted in a common ground of Puritan theology, were both created by statutes of Puritan commonwealths,

and governed by ministers of established churches, they were fundamentally different. This difference stemmed from the divergent development of the ecclesiastical politics of Massachusetts and Connecticut. The Congregational Church of Massachusetts, although an established church supported by the laws of the state, was unable to create a structure of ecclesiastical authority.[31] There were only loose, informal ties between churches and ministers. The congregation was the basic and only unit of organization. It examined ministerial candidates for doctrinal soundness, electing them if they proved satisfactory, and permitting them to serve at their sufferance. The congregation decided on the minister's remuneration, allocating from town funds the amount of his support. It was, in sum, a genuinely congregational church.

This loose confederation of congregations had two important consequences. First, there developed a remarkable degree of heterodoxy, ranging from the rationalist arminianism of the churches in the coastal cities to the fanatical evangelical ardor of the churches of the Connecticut Valley and the Berkshires.[32] Secondly, it meant that the church as a whole had very little influence over the affairs of Harvard College--for the way Harvard's charter was set up, the College reflected only the interests of the ministry of the coastal towns. Harvard was governed by two boards, the Fellows and the Overseers. The Fellows, who initiated policy, were self-perpetuating.

---

[31] David D. Hall, The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century (New York: 1972).

[32] Alan Heimert, Religion in the American Mind (Cambridge: 1966).

Having at the outset been composed of ministers from the Boston area, they tended to remain that way, Fellows choosing as their successors trustees who reflected their own theological and political viewpoints.[33] The Overseers, who ratified decisions of the Fellows, were a somewhat less closed group, consisting until 1780 of the President of the College, the Governor and Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts, and the ministers of the churches of Cambridge, Watertown, Boston, Roxbury, and Dorchester.[34]

The ministers who governed Harvard up to the end of the eighteenth century represented, on the whole, congregations of merchants and artisans who shared mild and secular views. Becuase of this, major changes could be brought about in the College--such as the appointment of laymen to its governing boards and the creation of professional schools--which were very much in the interest of the rising merchant group of the coastal towns. Harvard was, because of the ecclesiastical polity of Massachusetts, functionally autonomous. Basic policy decisions regarding curriculum, appointments, and other matters

---

[33] S. E. Morison, op. cit., 69-75.

[34] Harvard University, op. cit., 13-14.

could be made with the concurrance of a very narrow group--with the state and the church as a whole being able to exert little or no influence.

The situation was quite different in Connecticut. By the acceptance of the Saybrook Platform in 1708, the church of Connecticut, which had been Congregational in form, was transformed into a presbyterian organization. Power was decisively shifted from the congregations to the clergy:[35]

> The completed articles provided for the establishment of consociations in each county with oversight of local congregations, county ministerial associations with the responsibility of advising and examining ministerial candidates, and a general ministerial association to meet annually. The section also provided that pastors and churches refusing to attend meetings and to abide by decisions of the consociations would be declared in non-communion with the established churches.

The relation of Yale to this crypto-presbyterianism was complex. While the College did not, by the Saybrook Platform, occupy any special position, de facto it did. For its body of 10 self-perpetuating Fellows tended to be the most prestigious ministers in the state. And since the College was in the business of preparing aspiring clergymen for their theological studies, it came to be the primary enunciater and enforcer of orthodoxy. Although actual preparation for the ministry took place by apprenticeship to established ministers after graduating from Yale, the officers of the College could prevent a heterodox candidate from finding a sponsor and could, even if he

---

[35] Richard Warch, School of the Prophets, Yale College, 1701-1740 (New Haven: 1973), 55.

succeeded in finding a teacher, bar him from receiving a license to preach.

The adoption of the Saybrook Platform by the Connecticut churches had two important consequences. First, in creating administrative bodies superior to the congregation and rendering the ministry independent of the congregations by a system of state-tax support, the church became "a government within a government."[36] It was accountable neither to constituted civil authority nor to the gathered body of believers which made up its membership. While there would be fierce doctrinal controversies through the eighteenth century, the disciplinary powers of the orthodox clergy articulated both through the ministerial associations and through Yale College were always sufficient to crush or contain the heterodox.[37] The second major consequence of the Saybrook Platform was to increase the influence of the church over the affairs of Yale College. Decisions affecting the College were necessarily made with broader issues of church authority, discipline, and orthodoxy in mind. The composition of the Corporation reinforced this linkage with the church as a whole. For the Fellows represented congregations from all parts of the state. Unlike Harvard, where accountability to the broader public came about through the presence of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor on the Board of Overseers and through the influence of congregations on their ministers, Yale College was immune to the vagaries of cultural and political

---

[36] Harold J. Bingham, History of Connecticut (New York: 1962), I, 228-229.

[37] Warch, op. cit., 307.

reform, requiring consensus in a broad group for alterations in the school's traditional mission of "training up a learned ministry."

Both Massachusetts and Connecticut were racked by religious convulsions from the second quarter of the eighteenth century on. The Great Awakening, with its emphasis on the subjective experience of conversion under the guidance of emotional preaching--often by itinerant evangelists--- led to battles between clerical factions and their congregations over the definition of salvation and the proper nature of ecclesiastical authority and discipline. In the wake of evangels like Edwards and Whitfield--who saw their work as complimenting of the regular clergy--came stranger prophets, Methodists, Baptists, Sandemanians, and others--who preached up the organization of new churches and who questioned the legal position of the established Congregationalists. On the conservative side, the Church of England worked to gain adherents from among the faithful.

The response to these threats to the established church varied with the ecclesiastical polity of the state. Massachusetts, with its loose non-hierarchical structure, could contain and accomodate the new forces. They played themselves out or were suffered to coexist with the established church. Connecticut, however, with its rigid presbyterian structure resisted the tumult. Efforts were made, led by the President and Fellows of Yale College, to suppress and discipline dissenting ministers and congregations in the colony and students in the College.[38] While these efforts were generally successful,

---

[38] Kelley, op. cit., 49-72.

they were, on the whole, Pyrrhic victories. The church was able to control dissent, but it paid the price in a steadily eroding popular base of support for its power and doctrines. By 1755, discontent had grown so great that the General Assembly, in an effort to unseat Thomas Clap, the rigidly orthodox President of Yale, curtailed the state's annual grant to the College--which was not resumed until after his death in 1767.[39]

Even with the General Assembly and many ministers opposed to them, Thomas Clap and his "Old Light" allies were able to conduct the affairs of the College pretty much as they wished--drawing financial support from their political and ecclesiastical allies. His ability to do so was a testament to the peculiar power and insulation from popular desires wielded by the Congregational Church of Connecticut and its creature, Yale College, as constituted under the Saybrook Platform. Unlike Harvard, which responded rapidly and sympathetically to secular forces and the interests of the merchants of the coastal town, Yale, at great cost to itself, resisted changes in its charter and curriculum until the American Revolution. And when notions of change came to be entertained, they would be considered from the standpoint of their ability to increase the power of the established church rather than from any concern for secularization or modernization.

The expansion of Yale beyond its traditional classical curriculum did not become an issue until the mid-1770s, ten years after the death of Thomas Clap. The College was disordered by the war and a decade

---

[39] Warch, op. cit., 114-115.

without a forceful president. It was anxious for funds to reconstruct its decaying buildings. Further, after years of quarrels with the legislature over the right of visitation and other matters, the Fellows had become convinced of the desirability of recementing ties between the College and the political order. To obtain state assistance, they were willing to make major concessions to the General Assembly on a variety of issues including its advice on the choice of a new president, reforms in the structure of governance, and curricular changes by which the College might "better serve the needs of the state."

In the summer of 1777, Ezra Stiles was tending his flock at Newport, Rhode Island, where he had been minister since 1755. He recieved his first intimation of his candidacy for the Yale presidency in August, in a letter from Fellow James Dana of Wallingford. Dana's letter informed him that he had been mentioned as a candidate acceptable to both the General Assembly and to the Yale Corporation and that an expression of his willingness to accept the post might make large-scale government aid available to the College.[40] By late September, the Yale Corporation had formally elected Stiles to the office of President. He was informed of this by Fellow Stephen Johnson of Lyme, who came up to Rhode Island to give Stiles the news and fill him in on the College's negotiations with the Assembly:[41]

> (The Corporation) in the Spring appointed a Committee to request a conference with a Committee of Assembly. This conference was in July. The Committee of Assembly

---

[40] Franklin B. Dexter, ed., The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles (New York: 1901), II: 207-208.

[41] Ibid., II: 213-214.

> proposed an enlargement of the Institution without alteration of the Charter--that the Assembly should give an Addit. to the Liby, a phil. Apparatus, and Professorships of Med., Law, Oraty, &c. only that they should have a voice in concurrance with the Fellows in appointing professors supported by the State. This they supposed would produce a cordial Union between the College and Assembly. The Corpora had no thoughts of introducing the subject of a President. But the Committee of Assembly took this up and unanimously recommended me--saying that if the Fellows would do this and come into the above Ideas the Assembly would do everything for the aggrandizement of Yale College. Otherwise they should not.

The legislature was, in sum, willing to grant substantial financial assistance to Yale on three conditions: 1) if the College broadened its curriculum; 2) if the Assembly were given a voice in appointments to state-funded professorships; 3) if Ezra Stiles were made President of the College. These changes were implicitly linked, however, to broader changes in the church that fostered and controlled the school.

Stiles was reluctant to assume the Presidency. Not only did he already have a job--but he was being beseeched by a congregation in Portsmouth, New Hampshire to take up his pastorate there.[42] Further, he was fully aware of the tumultuous and uncertain position that he would occupy as President. He declined for seven months to commit himself to Yale's offer, making his acceptance contingent on the outcome of the negotiations between the Corporation and the General Assembly.[43] And he wanted a clear consensus of opinion in his favor from both the clergy and the magistracy.[44] On the third of December

---

[42] Ibid., II, 215.

[43] Ibid., II, 226.

[44] Ibid., II, 225-226.

1777, Stiles recorded the following in his Diary:[45]

> I drafted a Plan of a University, particularly describing the Law & Medical Lectures: at the desire of the Corpor[a] of Yale, to be by them laid before the Committee of the General Assembly of Connect. appointed to consider among other Things whether it be expedient to found these 2 Professorships.

As Stiles himself makes clear, the Plan was not a blue-print for what he wanted Yale to become. It was not a prescient vision. It was, rather, a memorandum written at the request of the Yale Corporation for the purpose of clarifying matters that were already under discussion between the College and the legislature.

I do not mean to explain away Stiles' vision. He was, in fact, briefly fascinated by the prospect of Yale's expansion into the fields of law, medicine, and other new studies. It is clear that during the months in which he struggled over whether to take up the Presidency that the prospect of organizing instruction in new branches of knowledge was more important to him than the questions of governance that preoccupied the Corporation and the Assembly. At one point, in February of 1778, he even suggested--in a letter to Fellow Eliphalet Williams--that Yale could support the professorships of law and medicine out of its own funds, regardless of the outcome of the College's negotiations with the state. It is essential, however, to recognize that Stiles' Plan was not a manifesto in which he foresaw Yale's mission as a university. In fact, the new professorships were little more than an attempt by the legislature to sweeten the pill of

---

[45] Ibid., II, 233.

civilian representation on the Yale Corporation.

By late February 1778, the negotiations between Yale and the legislature had fallen through. The College, having at the outset expressed its willingness to entertain the idea of partnership with the state and broadening the curriculum in exchange for large-scale financial aid, found itself confronted with increasingly radical demands from the Assembly in regard to civilian representation on the Corporation.[46] Fearing an outright state takeover, the College denounced the Assembly's plan and withdrew from the negotiations.

After much fasting and prayer, Ezra Stiles decided to accept the Presidency of Yale in March of 1778. Perhaps he thought that he could change the curriculum without help from the state. If he did think this--and if he was genuinely and deeply interested in expanding the curriculum--it is curious that he never again mentioned the subject in his Diary. Even though Yale would resume negotiations with the state ten years later, the question of professorships of law and medicine never came up. It seems clear, then, that the Plan of a University was not an expression of any long-range interest on the part of either Stiles or Yale in medical or any other kind of professional education. Whatever interest Stiles had in medicine was confined to occasional lectures to seniors on the subject.

If medical education at Yale was still-born, the issue of state-aid remained a topic of interest for both the College and the General Assembly after the failed negotiations of 1777-78. Through the 1780s,

---

[46] Ibid., II, 259.

Yale, the established church, and the civil order were buffeted by violent forces of economic, political, and ecclesiastical disruption. In 1784, the Assembly passed an "Act of Tolerance" which[47]

> . . . made dissent halfway respectable by freeing a dissenter, who presented a certificate declaring himself a member of some regular society recognized by law, from the payment of the Congregational tithe. . .

This recognition, however grudging, of the right of citizens to support and attend churches other than the established one, served to further undermine the eroding basis of support for the Congregational Church and Yale. But if the years immediately after the Revolution were ones of liberalization, the decades that followed were ones of conservative reaction. The deep post-war depression, Shay's Rebellion, and the horrors of the French Revolution frightened the respectable. Church and state recoalesced to protect the "Standing Order" and to crush the poor, dissenting, and vicious. One product of this reaction was the Act of Union of 1792.

This statute, by which civilians came to be included among the Fellows of the Yale Corporation, has generally been viewed as a liberalizing statute--one which broadened the College's horizons beyond that of its narrow clerical constituency.[48] While it did broaden Yale's constituency, it hardly liberalized it. Instead, it tied the fortunes of the established church and of Yale to the political interests of the "Standing Order" and to what would become the Federalist Party. Stiles was fully conscious of this, as he indicated in

---

[47] Richard J. Purcell, Connecticut in Transition, 1775-1818 (Middletown: 1963), 11.

[48] Kelley, op. cit., 103; John S. Whitehead, The Separation of College and State (New Haven: 1973), 40-42.

his Diary on hearing of the successful passage of the Act of Union in June of 1792.[49]

> Mr. Hillhouse presented me with copies of the Report of Committee & Act of Assembly past May 31st. In which the Assembly give to Yale Coll certain arrears of Taxes. . . estimated to neat to 8 or 9,000, perhaps 10 or 12,000: on condition the Corpor[a] associate 8 Civilians, viz. Gev., Lt.G., 6 Senior Councillors. . . This is a grand & liberal don[a] & a Noble Condescention, beyond all expectation! Especially that the Civilians should acquiesce in being a Minority in the Corporation. (. . .) The Original Institution, tne Religion of the College, & the preserva of it in the hands of Ecclesiastics (if there should ever be a conflict, we pray God there never may be) will all be secure. I have doubted whether a Third, or any Minority, anything short of a Plurality & Controlling majority of Civilians, would give general satisfaction. But the Assembly were so fully and cordially in the measure that I think it will settle & conciliate all Opponents of the College, except among the Ministers; & I rather think they will greatly acquiesce & think it wise to accept the overture. . . . The College will hereby always have a majority of the Upper House in their friendship, & have six Members as a Court of Appeal in College Cases. The clergy will have a particular and special Reason now to preach up for & recommend the Election of religious & undeistical Counsellors; & the'now & then an unprincipled Character may get into the Council, he may be hunted down in a future Election. It may be mutually beneficial by preserv[g] a religious magistracy & a more catholic clergy.

As delighted as Stiles was by the grant of state aid and by a compromise on the composition of the Corporation which allowed ministers to remain in the majority, it is clear that his greatest pleasure was in the feature of the Act of Union that would increase the means for enforcing religious and political orthodoxy. But in connecting ecclesiastical and political forces, the Act would make changing the form and function of the College far more difficult. Any such proposal

---

[49] Dexter, op. cit., III, 457-8.

would henceforth require not only the approval of the clergy, but also of the state's political leadership. Since the primary concern of both groups would, through the 1790s, become the suppression of political and ecclesiastical dissent, alterations in the College would have to serve this end in order to gain such approval.

Stiles' successor, Timothy Dwight, was just the man to preside over the kind of institution that Yale became after 1792. Although a minister, he was also a practicing politician. He had served in the Massachusetts General Court as a representative from Northampton.[50] He came to be known among his enemies as "Pope" Dwight--not only because of his strenuous efforts to maintain ecclesiastical discipline, but also because he, like the Bishop of Rome, did not hesitate to use both the temporal and spiritual swords in "hunting down unprincipled characters." There was no doubt in his mind about the connection between religious irregularity and political subversion.[51]

If the Act of Union represented a structure that required the subservience of the College to political and religious uniformity, the character and opinions of President Dwight guaranteed that alterations in the College would be predicated on their utility in serving the same goals. This was certainly the case in the innovations that Dwight brought about before turning his hand to medical education. After purging out Josiah Meigs, the professor of natural philosophy,

---

[50] Baldwin, op. cit., 133-154.

[51] For an excellent account of Dwight's political preoccupations, see R.H. Gabriel, Religion and Learning at Yale (New Haven: 1958), 54-82.

for his deistical views and friendship to the ideas of Thomas Jefferson and the French Revolution, he set about to look for a replacement who was more politically reliable. This was no easy task. The two most brilliant natural philosophers of the period, Joseph Priestley and Benjamin Thompson, were politically unacceptable. The former had been chased out of England in 1791 by a mob bent on lynching him for his radically democratic and pro-French opinions. Thompson, although a New Englander, had turned Tory during the Revolution and was pursuing his work in physics under the patronage of the King of Bavaria.[52] Rather than hiring a distinguished foreigner of uncertain sentiments, Dwight decided to train a natural philosopher whom he knew he could trust. He settled upon Benjamin Silliman, a recent graduate, who, having been chosen for the purity of his principles, was sent off to Europe to learn something about science.[53]

Dwight initiated a program of legal education during the years 1801-1803. Once again, politics seems to have been the primary motive. The single instructor, Elizur Goodrich, had recently been deposed as Collector of the Port of New Haven by President Jefferson in one of the first of his patronage appointments.[54] Goodrich was viewed by Connecticut Federalists as a martyr to "Mad Tom's" lust for power. "Pope" Dwight was happy to find him a niche in Yale as lecturer in

---

[52] Mitchell Wilson, American Science and Invention (New York: 1954), 24-37.

[53] Baldwin, op. cit., 136; Kelley, op. cit., 135-7.

[54] Baldwin, op. cit., 173-174; Purcell, op. cit., 153-154; Noble E. Cunningham, The Jeffersonian Republicans in Power: Party Operations, 1801-1809 (Chapel Hill: 1963).

Constitutional Law while he reconstructed his political career. Goodrich left Yale in 1803, on his election as Mayor of New Haven. The chair in Law was left vacant until 1826.[55]

Religious and political dissent were on the increase in Connecticut from the late 1790s on. By the fall of 1800, persons opposing the national policies of John Adams and the local hegemony of the Federalist magistracy and the established church began organizing the first political party in the new republic--drawing up tickets of opposition candidates, "electioneering" for them, and setting up a hierarchy of party leadership.[56] Yale and the church were the primary targets of the Jeffersonians, whose power in the state was based largely on the restrictions placed on religious freedom by the Standing Order. When Jefferson was elected in 1800, he did not win Connecticut's support. Nonetheless, the results of the elections for General Assembly for October 1800 placed 27 Jeffersonians in the legislature--a number that would steadily increase until 1808.[57] Federalism was on the defensive in the "Land of Steady Habits." As allies of the Standing Order were replaced in all major federal posts (collectorships of customs, postmasterships, and other offices) by Jeffersonians and as the strength

---

[55] Baldwin, op. cit., 174. It is really a misnomer to speak of Goodrich's position as a "chair." To do so implies an intention by Yale to establish a permanent position for a teacher of Law as early as 1801. There is no reason to believe that Yale had any such intent.

[56] Cunningham, op. cit., 125-132; Purcell, op. cit., 146-151.

[57] Purcell, op. cit., 175.

of the opposition party increased in the General Assembly, "Pope" Dwight frantically mustered his temporal and spiritual forces to take arms against the rising tide of infidelity.

By the elections for General Assembly of October 1806, Jeffersonian strength was alarming: over a third of the seats were held by enemies of the church and the college. It is against this background that the sudden resolution of the Yale Corporation to create a medical school must be viewed.

The Connecticut Medical Society was chartered in 1792 by the same session of the General Assembly that passed on the Act of Union between Yale and the State. The Society appears to have been created for two purposes: 1) to improve the financial situation of physicians by restricting the legal process of recovery for fees to physicians licensed by the Society; 2) to restrict the number and quality of physicians practicing in the state, reducing competition and raising both the cost of medical care and the status of practitioners.[58] The Society showed no interest in medical education. Not until 1799 did it even attempt to codify its expectations of what should be required of aspirants to the profession. Nor did it express any desire to join forces with Yale for the purposes of establishing a medical school previous to its response to the College's overtures of 1806.

There were tensions within the Society which seem to have paralleled the political and religious tensions in the state. At the outset, they involved struggles over whether the state-wide organization

---

[58] Connecticut Medical Society, Proceedings (Hartford: 1884), vi-viii.

or the county societies should be preeminent.[59] Later the conflicts became more explicitly political. In 1796, a committee led by Mason Fitch Cogswell of Hartford attempted to lengthen the terms of officers of the state society beyond the one year specified in the charter.[60] The measure was defeated. A year later, in 1797, another committee led by Cogswell attempted to take the power of licensing away from the county societies and their examining committees, placing it in the hands of a central state licensing board.[61] Since the leadership of the Society was in the hands of New Haven and Hartford Federalists, this would have given them control over admission to the medical profession comparable to Yale's control over candidates to the ministry. The opponents of the measure, many of whom were Jeffersonians in politics, repealed the resolution at the Society's next general convention in October of 1798.[62]

The Connecticut Medical Society did not address the issue of medical education directly until its general convention in October of

---

[59] The organization of the Connecticut Medical Society was as follows: each county had its own medical society; these county societies annually elected Fellows to the state society; the Fellows, in turn, elected the officers of the state society--a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. While the Fellows, meeting in convention twice a year, were empowered to make policy for both the state and county societies, issues involving changes in the by-laws or the charter were referred to county societies for their approval. The original charter left many crucial areas undefined--such as whether officers of the state society had to be Fellows or could be elected from the whole membership.

[60] Proceedings, October 2, 1796, 43.

[61] Ibid., May 1797, 50.

[62] Ibid., October 17, 1798, 62.

1799. At this meeting it was resolved to appoint a broadly-based committee to "take into consideration and digest some regular system of education to be pursued by candidates for the practice of physick and surgery."[63] The committee, chaired by the President of the Society--New Haven Federalist Eneas Munson--delivered its report to the Society's next meeting in May of 1800. It was brief and to the point.[64]

> That no candidate for the practice of Physic of Surgery in this State shall be admitted to examination until he shall have attained the age of twenty-one years, is of good reputation, and shall have had a collegiate education, and shall have studied at least two years with some reputable Physician or Surgeon; or if he has not had such preparatory education, shall have studied at least three years with such practitioner, and shall not be licensed to practice unless found qualified as follows, viz.:
>
> A general knowledge of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, and Botony, and a thorough knowledge of Materia Medica, Pharmacy, Anatomy and Physiology, Theory and Practice of Physic and Surgery.

This report was clearly a compromise. The Federalists would have preferred standards for admission to candidacy which would have made a collegiate education mandatory--thus restricting entry into the profession to the well-to-do and to those who, having gone through the rigorous tutelage of Timothy Dwight, were politically sound. The country physicians, many of them Jeffersonians and religious dissenters, would have naturally been opposed to such a requirement. Not only would they have objected to the inegalitarian nature of a required collegiate preparation, but they also would have been unwilling to

---

63 Ibid., October 16, 1799, 72.

64 Ibid., May 14, 1800, 77.

give Yale, the citadel of Federalism and Congregationalist orthodoxy, a monopoly of preparatory education for physicians. There were, in addition, differences between the two factions that ran deeper than politics and religion, involving the nature of their own practices and their concepts of the proper role of the physician. The Federalists tended toward a more modern practice--functionally specific, their activities restricted solely to medicine. This kind of specialization was possible only in densely populated areas--in cities like New Haven and Hartford. Jeffersonians, on the other hand, tended to practice in the countryside or in smaller towns. For them a range of diffuse activity was essential for economic survival. Such a range often included teaching, shop-keeping, farming, compounding drugs, and training medical apprentices.[65]

While it is conceivable that physicians might have put aside their own economic and political interests in considering the good of the profession, they do not appear to have done so. In medical leaders such as Jared Potter, religious dissent, Jeffersonian politics, and opposition to Yale appear to have been firmly linked:[66]

> His interest in politics was intense. Beginning with distrust of the aristocratic bias of the Federalists, he became in later life one of the most conspicuous leaders of the Jeffersonian democracy in this vicinity... While still in college he became in religious belief a universalist, and so continued through life. The positiveness with which he held these unpopular views and

---

[65] See appended analysis of the Fellows of the Medical Society.

[66] F. B. Dexter, op. cit., III, 669.

> his readiness to controversy gave him additional prominence, and he was freely stigmatized as an infidel.
>
> An attitude in politics and religion, so at variance with the prevailing sentiments in the College, produced in him a bitterness of feeling which led him in later years to inveigh loudly against the Institution and dissuade young men from attending it.

Potter was not an isolated crank. A Yale graduate in the class of 1760, a co-founder of the Medical Society who had served as a Fellow (1792-94, 1795-1803, 1804-1805), as Secretary (1792-1794), and as Vice-President (1804-1806), he was clearly an influential medical leader. He was a local political leader as well, serving continuously in the General Assembly for the Town of Wallingford between 1780 and 1809. In spite of his political and religious heterodoxy, he was one of the most famous and respected physicians in the state, a friend and correspondent of Benjamin Franklin, and possessor of one of the best medical libraries in Connecticut.[67] Given a leadership centered around men like Potter, it is hardly surprising that Federalist attempts to give Yale a monopoly of pre-medical education engendered intense and influential opposition.

Whether the Jeffersonians in the Society were responding to what they saw as a Federalist power-grab in the report on medical education of 1800--or whether they were merely carrying out the stated Jeffersonian objective of "revolutionizing" the Land of Steady Habits--they appear to have staged a coup against the Federalist leadership

---

[67] For more on Jared Potter, see Herbert Thoms, The Doctors Jared of Connecticut (Hamden: 1958); Henry Bronson, op. cit., 75-93; and James Thacher, American Medical Biography (Boston: 1828), 426-27.

of the Society in 1801. In the fall of that year, the two most powerful Federalists in the Society, Eneas Munson of New Haven and Mason Fitch Cogswell of Hartford, were suddenly deposed. Munson had served as President of the group since 1794 and had chaired the committee on medical education. Cogswell, who had served as Treasurer since 1796, had been a leader of efforts to centralize Federalist control over Connecticut doctors by emasculating the examining power of the county medical committees. The only surviving description of the coup is contained in Henry Bronson's biography of Munson:[68]

> For seven successive years he held the office of president, when his reelection was apparently prevented by a conspiracy at the New Haven County meeting, in September, 1801. Previously to that time, and subsequently for several years, it was the practice to elect the president for the time being a fellow; but at that meeting the rule was disregarded. It was also the custom--much complained of, but supposed to be in conformity with the charter, to select the president from among the fellows in convention. Dr. Munson, not being a fellow, was not a candidate for the office, and Doctor James Potter of Fairfield County, was chosen his successor. He was thus defeated, seemingly by the movement that left him out of the county delegation. . . .I infer that he regarded this action in the county meeting as a personal indignity, for he immediately asked to be "dismissed from any further connection with the society."

The Jeffersonians appear to have taken advantage of the representative structure of the state society, preventing Munson's reelection as a Fellow from New Haven County, thereby eliminating him from consideration by the state convention as a candidate for reelection to the

---

[68] Bronson, op. cit., 27-28.

presidency.[69] It was sharp dealing and Munson was understandably bitter.

If Munson confined his bitterness to resigning from the state society, his younger colleague, Mason Fitch Cogswell, took up his pen. He recognized the political nature of the conspiracy and linked it to the Society's resolutions on medical education. Deposed, he wrote in his wrath a brutal attack in verse on the leaders of the Jeffersonian faction. This poem illuminates the linkage of the issue of medical education to politics and to the conspiracy by which he, Munson, and Secretary Nathaniel Perry were deposed.

Cogswell's attack is entitled "From the Characteristics--An Unpublished Poem."[70] It begins with an attack on Doctor Samuel Woodward of Torrington, Litchfield County, who had been elected Secretary of the Society in 1800. Like Jared Potter, Woodward was major leader of the Jeffersonians in state politics and a religious dissenter:[71]

> Amid this group see puffing Woodward rise,
> With learned nonesense peeping through his eyes.

---

[69] The precise mechanics of Munson's ouster were probably more complex than Bronson allows. An amendment to the Society's charter passed in 1797 states that the convention was not required to limit its choice of officers to the Fellows but could elect them "from the medical society at large." Further, Munson resigned only from the state society--not from the county one. These facts suggest that the conspiracy was centered in the state society and that, by implication, opposition to Munson may have been more broadly based. Whatever the facts of the case, Bronson's analysis, however defective, must be accepted in the absence of any manuscript sources that might shed further light on the situation.

[70] The original manuscript of Cogswell's poem is in the Cogswell Papers at the Connecticut State Historical Society in Hartford.

[71] The most complete biography of Samuel Woodward is contained in Samuel Orcutt, History of Torrington, Connecticut (Albany: 1878), 623-626.

Grown old in Error -- in experience young,
Folly comes tumbling from his filthy tongue,
Till modest Decency, with manners true,
Blushed for the doubt, & silently withdrew.
Faction was asked for her beloved child:
Faction arose & straight on Woodward smiled. . .

Cogswell's attack on Woodward as a fomenter of faction reveals his Federalist preoccupations--for at the center of the attack of the Standing Order on the Jeffersonians was their rage at the "interested" disruption of an organic unity of public and private purposes and of an ordered social hierarchy. He was not content to attack Woodward as a fool and a democrat--but went to belabor his moral character:

In such a heart, what wonder if we find
Conceit and Malice amiably join'd?
Less wonder, still, if sweet connubial life
Is spent in "ploughing" with his neighbor's wife;
And still, still less, if wonders are at all,
That Woodward triumphs when the righteous fall.
Whatever of faction Billingsgate had heard,
Whate'er of Vice on Tyburn has appeared,
Whate'er of smut in Brothelwalls was shewn,
In Woodward all are intimately known.

The poem moves on to a general attack on the Jeffersonian opposition to Yale's monopoly of pre-medical education:

Hail sons of learning! raise your wondering sight!
Behold what wonders Woodward brings to light!
Wonders, which come not of ancient lore;
Wonders, which learning never knew before;
Wonders, which neither Greece, nor Rome would boast,
Nor ever flourished on Europa's coast,
Nor medic schools, nor Colleges, have heard,
Nor only in Connecticut appeared.
Strange, wond'rous strange--Distemper new & rare!
Calling aloud for Aesculapian care.
By Potter gender'd in Convention-wall,
The brat's conceived, & sworn on Doctor Hall,
Fathered by Gander--time being now full sped,
In Babcock's press the Strumpet's brought to bed,
While men of science wond'ring, stood to see
Of such an offspring what the sire should be. . .

In this stanza, Cogswell links the Woodward faction explicitly to the Jeffersonians. "Babcock's press" in which the "Strumpet" of medical education was brought to bed was the American Mercury of Hartford, the leading Jeffersonian organ in the state.[72] It is unclear whether the Potter refered to here is Jared Potter of Wallingford or James Potter of New Fairfield. The political inclinations of the latter are not known--though it is a pretty fair assumption that he must have favored the Jeffersonians if he was willing to succeed to the presidency of the Society, supplanting the Federalist Eneas Munson. Since James rather than Jared was a member of the committee on medical education and is cited by Cogswell as one of the several fathers of the deformed plan of education, it seems likely that the poem refers to him rather than to his more opinionated kinsman.

The target of Cogswell's sharpest barbs was William Brenton Hall of Middletown.[73] Hall, a protege of Jared Potter, sat on the committee

---

[72] Cogswell's manuscript contains two footnotes at this point. The first explains the phrase "Fathered by Gander" by making reference to a satirical poem that appeared in the Connecticut Courant in 1789. "Gander" is Samuel Woodward. The second footnote refers the reader to "Babcock's paper giving an account of the proceedings of the Connecticut Med. Convention, signed 'Samuel Woodward, Secretary.'" This could have only referred to the convention of October 1800--the only one at which Woodward served as Secretary. Unfortunately, there is no surviving copy of the Mercury containing Woodward's account--so it is impossible to know exactly what the Jeffersonians were up to other than through Cogswell's verses.

[73] For material on Hall see F. B. Dexter, op. cit., IV, 481-82; T. P. Hall, Genealogical Notes (Albany: 1886), 48-53, 161-63; C. S. Hall, Hall Ancestry (New York: 1896), 376-385; Rufus Matthewson, "Biographical Sketches of the Original Members of the Middlesex County Medical Society" in Connecticut Medical Society, Proceedings (1877), 145-147.

that drafted the controversial report of 1800. A prolific teacher of physicians, he succeeded to Cogswell's position as Treasurer of the Medical Society. Hall is denounced for a variety of reasons: for his activity as a teacher, which made him an interested party to any plan of education that included apprenticeship training; as a demagogue--because of his support for Woodward's faction and his Jeffersonian leanings; and because he typified for Cogswell the unspecialized country doctor:

> See next arise, & puff across the stage,
> The learned puppet of this learned age.
> This pious child in Middletown appears,
> With tongue much more supplied, than brains, or ears.
> Far, far, o'er vulgar error soars his mind,
> Nor oaths, nor promises his faith can bind;
> Not honor's self, nor ought but statute law,
> With him has force mere binding than a straw.
> Nothing but interest can o'er control
> The publick spirit of so great a soul.
> Governed by interest, all else give way;
> Her laws alone "great geniuses obey."
> Friendship & Justice, Honor, Truth, & Love,
> A trifling sacrifice to interest prove.
>
> With him, to make young Doctors rules are vain
> "Blairs Lectures" only, make the business plain,
> With those in hand, he turns them out as fast
> As tramping Tinkers pewter buttons cast.
> Strange, very strange, that in one soul we find
> Such great & numerous offices combined:
> Surgeon, Demagogue, Preceptor, Preacher,
> Dentist, Physician, Midwife, Rhetoric-teacher,
> Moral Philosopher, Schoolmaster, all
> Unite, & harmonize in Doctor Hall.

It is unfortunate that the Jeffersonian physicians never wrote a manifesto of their intentions in regard to medical education and the functions of the Medical Society. If they did, it does not survive--nor have any letters or diaries turned up to provide a clear picture of factions and the issues around which they were organized. It is

safe to say, however, that their program did not include any connection with Yale. Nor is there any reason to believe that they intended to found an autonomous medical school--as physicians in western Massachusetts would do in 1830. Instead, they appear to have favored a version of the English model of medical education in which teaching and licensing were carried on by the physicians' guilds. During the period that they controlled the Medical Society, they appear to have conducted it in a guild-like fashion: professional standards were set by county meetings rather than the state society; students continued to be taught through the apprenticeship system; the emphasis of action in the state society seems to have been on medical policing, on the maintenance of rules against the sale of nostrums--proprietary medications.

It also seems clear that, in its exercise of its power to grant degrees, the Society saw itself as a medical faculty. Certain physicians were coming to dominate apprenticeship training and were recognized by their colleagues as superior teachers. Potter, Woodward, Hall--all Jeffersonians--were also teachers of note who attracted students from all parts of the state. Their reluctance to organize medical teaching under Yale's auspices should not be seen as an indifference to medical improvement. Rather, they should be seen to be pursuing a course in which improved teaching was pursued through a decentralized structure--a guild rather than a bureaucracy.

It is in the context of the increasing success of the Jeffersonian-controlled Connecticut Medical Society as a guild and the steady increase of Jeffersonian political strength that the Rev. Nathan

Strong's resolution calling for the creation of a medical professorship must be understood.

The Reverand Nathan Strong, pastor of the First Church of Hartford, was not a disinterested observer of medical and collegiate affairs. He was closely connected both to President Dwight and to the family of the Federalist medical leader, Mason Fitch Cogswell. Strong and Dwight had graduated together in the Class of 1769.[74] Both had stayed in New Haven after receiving their degrees, Strong as Butler of the College between 1770 and 1772, Dwight as Rector of the Hopkins Grammar School between 1769 and 1771. They served together as Tutors in the College--Dwight taking up that position in September of 1771, to be joined by his classmate Strong the following year. Both originally expected to become lawyers--but appear to have undergone spiritual crises during their years together in New Haven that turned them towards the ministry.[75] Strong was elected a Fellow of the Yale Corporation in 1804--doubtless with the active support of his old friend.

Nathan Strong's connections to the Cogswell family were also close and compelling. His father and the Rev. James Cogswell, Mason Fitch Cogswell's father, had graduated together in the Class of 1742. Both had spent their active lives serving parishes proximous to one another in northeastern Connecticut--Strong in the church at Coventry,

---

[74] Dexter, op. cit., III, 321-26, 357-63; Thoms, Doctors of Yale College, 115.

[75] Strong's conversion appears to have occurred in the years 1771-72--Dwight does not appear to have undergone his until 1774, when he united with the College Church.

Cogswell in churches at Canterbury and Scotland Parish, Windham.[76] The younger Strong was called to the First Church at Hartford in 1773. When Mason Fitch Cogswell, having graduated from Yale and completed his medical studies, was considering where to set up his practice, he called on Strong for advice--as he wrote his father in December of 1778:[77]

> .... I am now at Mr. Strong's. He has treated me with particular friendship, and has set before me the difficulties I should have to encounter and the probable prospects of success; and on the whole has given it as his opinion, that with application, attention to my business, and upright character, patience, etc., I may succeed. His situation, however, respecting the Physicians of this place are such that he does not wish to have it known. The candor with which he has treated the subject, and the goodness which he seems to discover on all occasions has warmly attached him to me....

Strong's advice appears to have been decisive. Cogswell moved to Hartford in 1789 and became a member of his congregation. When Cogswell's father retired and moved to Hartford in 1804, he too became a member of Strong's congregation. On his death in 1807, Nathan Strong delivered--and later published--the funeral sermon over the venerable domini.[78] His continuing friendship with the family is further attested to by his presence among the earliest supporters of Mason Fitch Cogswell's attempts to establish the American Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb.[79] Given his relationship to the Cogswells, Strong could not

---

[76] Dexter, op. cit., I, 701-703, 720-722.

[77] Grace Cogswell Root, Father and Daughter: A Collection of Cogswell Family Letters and Diaries (West Hartford: 1924), 33-34.

[78] Nathan Strong, A Sermon Delivered at Hartford, January 6, 1807, at the Funeral of the Rev. James Cogswell (Hartford: 1807).

[79] J. Hammond Trumbull, Memorial History of Hartford County, Connecticut (Boston: 1886) I, 425.

have been unaware of Mason's bitterness at having been forced out of his position in the Medical Society by the Jeffersonians. And his interest must have been intensified by the fact that his own son, Nathan Strong, Jr., was an aspiring physician.[80]

The connections between Strong, Cogswell, and Dwight go beyond parallel relations between the two older men and the young Federalist physician. For Timothy Dwight was not only a friend of Cogswell's, but a relative as well. Abigail Lloyd, wife of Cogswell's older brother James, was the first cousin of Mary Woolsey, wife of President Dwight.[81] Although the relation to Mason was indirect, he considered Dwight to be his cousin--and began a friendship with him in 1788.[82] This friendship grew as Dwight and Cogswell became members of the same literary and intellectual group, the Hartford Wits.[83] Cogswell considered Dwight's younger brother, Theodore, to be one of his best friends.[84] And another brother of the Yale President's, Nathaniel Dwight, studied medicine with Cogswell and became his colleague in Hartford.[85]

Strong's resolution calling for the establishment of a medical professorship did not come out of the blue. It appears to have been the product of cooperation between the leading Federalist in the Medical

---

80 Dexter, op. cit., III, 359; Yale Catalogue of Graduates, op. cit., 578.

81 B. W. Dwight, The History of the Descendants of John Dwight (New York: 1874), 1093-95; Cogswell, op. cit., 19-20.

82 Ibid., 22, 33, 46.

83 Ibid., 34.

84 Ibid., 52-53.

85 Dwight, op. cit., 245-47.

Society and two of his close friends--Dwight and Strong. Both clergymen were clearly well informed about the politics of the society, not only through Cogswell, but through Dwight's brother, Nathaniel, and Strong's son, Nathan, who was also a physician. All three shared strong political convictions which ran counter to the views of the Jeffersonian leadership both in politics and in regard to medical organization. The success of the Society under Jeffersonian control and the rising power of the opposition political party in the state gave them ample cause for alarm--and reason to take steps to return the Society to Federalist control.

Dark plots were afoot. Strong made his proposal to establish a medical professorship at Yale in September of 1806. Four months later, in January of 1807, the Federalists appear to have staged a counter-coup in the Medical Society, wresting from the Jeffersonians the leadership of the profession that they had held since 1801. It is probable that they had originally intended to strike their blow in May of 1807. The spring meeting of the Society was usually sparsely attended and the Federalists may have hoped that they could dominate such a meeting by encouraging all of their number to attend. If they succeeded, they could count on Yale's proposal being introduced to a friendly audience and referred to a Federalist-dominated committee which would be inclined to support the idea of a medical school. But fate intervened, forcing them to act earlier than they had planned.

In October of 1806, just after returning from the general convention, Jeremiah West, President of the Society, collapsed and died.[86]

---

[86] Dexter, op. cit., III, 540-541.

Normally, the Society would have permitted the Vice-President to perform the duties of the deceased President until the next general meeting in October. The Federalists, however, appear to have recognized that they had a unique opportunity to recapture the organization. The Charter provided that only twelve of the Society's thirty-six Fellows were required for a quorum to transact business.[87] Accordingly, they took the unprecedented step of calling a special meeting to convene at Hartford "for the purpose of choosing a President, in consequence of the death of their late President, Dr. West." It was a "rump" meeting. Exactly twelve Fellows attended. Five of the twelve were from Hartford County, three from Tolland, one each from Middlesex, Fairfield, and New London, none from Litchfield or Windham. Four of the twelve were known Federalists, one was a Jeffersonian, the politics of eight are unknown. Since only a majority of the quorum was needed to carry motions, the Federalists needed only seven votes to control the session. It is hardly surprising that they succeeded in electing Federalists John R. Watrous and Mason Fitch Cogswell as President and Vice-President of the Society.

Yale's proposal to begin discussion about a medical school was introduced at the next regular meeting of the Society in May of 1807. It was placed in the hands of a leadership which, by skull-duggery, was ready to receive it favorably. The matter was referred to a committee appointed by the President and hence dominated by Federalists. It consisted of: Watrous (President), Cogswell (Vice-President), Barker (Secretary), and Eli Ives (protege of Federalist Eneas Munson, who had

---

[87] Connecticut Medical Society, op. cit., viii.

been ousted by the Jeffersonian seven years earlier).[88] The lone Jeffersonian on the committee was Joseph Foot of Northford, a deist and former student of Jared Potter's.[89] The result of the deliberations of such a body were a foregone conclusion.

At the general convention of the Medical Society in October of 1807, the Jeffersonians tried to strike back against the Federalist coup. While they succeeded in passing a resolution declaring the action of the January meeting to be contrary to the Charter, they were unable to oust the Federalists who had been elected at that session.[90] And they lost their hold on the last leadership position in their control when William Brenton Hall, who was in failing health, was unable to win re-election as Tresurer. He was replaced by Timothy Hall of East Hartford, a Federalist.

The Federalist drive for control of the profession and for union with Yale rolled on. A committee of four appointed in May to consider the proposed medical instituion reported in favor of the idea.[91] A new committee was appointed for the purpose of meeting jointly with representatives of Yale to discuss the plan. Four of the eight members were known Federalists--Timothy Hall, John Barker, and John R. Watrous has been members of the rump meeting of January 1807; Nathaniel Perry

---

[88] Connecticut Medical Society, op. cit., 20-21 May 1807; in regard to Eli Ives, see Bronson, op. cit., 32.

[89] Ibid., 96-97.

[90] Connecticut Medical Society, op. cit., October 14-15, 1807, 138.

[91] Ibid., 139.

had been displaced as Secretary of the Society in the Jeffersonian Coup of 1801. Three of the members were known or possible Jeffersonians--John S. Peters and William Shelton, who were Episcopalians, and Smith Clark, a close friend of the deposed Jeffersonian Treasurer, William B. Hall. The politics of the eighth member, Siah Fuller, are unknown. Even if the committee had been equally divided between the two factions, the Jeffersonians would have been a minority voice when submerged in a joint-committee with the Federalists appointed by and presided over by Timothy Dwight. Federalist success seemed assured.

The committees of Yale College and the Connecticut Medical Society met jointly through the fall and winter of 1807 and 1808 under the chairmanship of President Dwight. But, as Silliman's account suggests, there was still opposition to founding a medical school under Yale's auspices. The Federalists could hound their opponents out of the Medical Society's leadership, but they could not silence them. And even those physicians who did not link issues of medical organization with politics were bound to question the wisdom of sacrificing their autonomy to an institution dominated by clergymen. Nor could they have been enthusiastic about the prospect of losing a major source of income--the teaching of students in the apprenticeship system. Finally, as Silliman indicates, some physicians were troubled by the possibility that medical education in the proposed school would become the prerogative of the well-to-do.

The Articles of Union as finally worked out were a compromise.

[illegible] Yale, II[illegible]

The Federalists got their medical school--but very little else. The standards for admission into the profession were only slightly altered from those proposed in the Medical Society's report of 1800. The Federalists were not able to pursuade their colleagues that a collegiate education should be a prerequisite for medical studies. Nor was apprenticeship training altogether eliminated--for the Articles specified that candidates for the medical license had three alternative means of achieving it, all requiring some involvement in apprenticeship:[92]

> Under the arrangement it was. . . stipulated that in order to qualify for admission to examination for medical licensure the young man must have (i) collegiate degree, based on two years study with a medical professor or practitioner, and have attended a course of lectures at the Medical Institution, or (ii) if he was not a college graduate, three years study with a medical professor or practitioner, plus a course of lectures at the Medical Institution. If in addition he wished to qualify for the degree of Doctor of Medicine, he would be obliged to attend two courses of lectures.

Licensing and the granting of degrees were to be shared by the Medical Society and Yale--an evenly-divided joint committee from each organization was entrusted with these tasks.[93] In return for this concession, Yale granted the Medical Society an equal voice in the nomination of professors in the medical school.[94] On the whole, the arrangement very much resembled the "Act of Union" of 1792 between the State and the College by which laymen were admitted to the Yale Corporation. Like

---

[92] Thoms, Doctors of Yale, 117.

[93] Baldwin, op. cit., 176.

[94] Ibid., 176.

Stiles, Dwight may have realized that he had nothing to lose by compromising since any control over medical affairs would be better than none. Just as the 1792 connection between the College and the State gave both ministers and magistrates a "particular and special Reason" to speak up for and recommend "religious and undiestical" counsellors, so the union of Yale with the medical school gave the politically and religiously orthodox in the medical profession special impetus to be vigilant and vigorous in hunting out the politically unreliable.

The report of the joint committee on the proposed union between Yale and the Medical Society was submitted to the county societies for approval in May of 1808. When the Society met again in October, the returns indicated that the general membership of the Society had approved the proposed union of the Medical Society with the College. The establishment of the Medical Institution seemed imminent.

But it was not imminent. For some reason--"a reason never disclosed"--the plan for establishing a Medical Institution was not placed before the Yale Corporation for two years. The public explanation for the delay is unconvincing: it is hardly credible that a project which has absorbed the energies of President Dwight, Benjamin Silliman, Nathan Strong, and other members of the Corporation and the faculty for two years should have not been placed before the Fellows of Yale "through some neglect of inadvertance."

There are two more plausible explanations for Dwight's unwillingness to place the question of a medical school before the Corporation. The first involves the possibility that Dwight may have felt that the board as constituted in 1808 would have been unwilling to accept Yale's

departure from its traditional mission of undergraduate education, particularly when the departure gave the Medical Society so great a role in controlling the Medical Institution. There are shifts in the age cohorts of Corporation members between September of 1808 and September of 1810 that suggest that Fellows may have been more open to programs of change in 1810 than they were two years earlier: in 1808, only three of the ten Fellows had graduated in Dwight's class (1769) or later; by 1810, five of the ten were Dwight's contemporaries or younger. In 1808, the average class of graduation of Fellows was 1763; by 1810, it was 1767.[95] Tantalizing as these data are, there is no evidence that Dwight's plan was opposed by Corporation members. Once again, the more convincing explanation seems to lie in the realm of Connecticut state politics and in the peculiar importance of Yale and the established church in the struggle between parties.

President Dwight and his Federalist medical friends may have realized that they had acted too precipitously in taking over the only institution controlled by Jeffersonians in Connecticut. However great their success may have been in "hunting down unprincipled characters" in the Medical Society, they still had to apply to the General Assembly for approval of the Articles of Union that would establish the Medical Institution. And in 1808, Jeffersonians still held over a third of the seats.[96]

---

[95] See Catalogue of Graduates, 12-13.

[96] Purcell, op. cit., 177. Although Federalists may have "gloried in Connecticut's stability in the face of seven years of Revolutionary effort" by the Jeffersonians, toasting the state as "the tight ship that lives out every storm" or as "Noah's Ark in the Deluge of Democracy," they cannot have been entirely confident. For they had no reason to believe that the deluge of democracy would ever recede.

While not sufficiently strong to block approval by themselves, there was the possibility that the Jeffersonians might have been able to combine forces with nominally Federalist legislators who had their own reasons for being hostile to Yale and to Timothy Dwight. And since both the charters of Yale and of the Medical Society would, in the course of debate, be under legislative review, it may have been decided that it would be imprudently risky to give the enemies of the Standing Order an opportunity to strike out at the citadel of that Order. Beyond this, Dwight may have hoped to receive financial aid from the state for the new enterprise. Given the uncertain political climate, he could not hope to obtain it. It would appear, in sum, that Yale's delay in submitting the Articles of Union to the legislature was due to Dwight's fear that various disaffected groups in the state might block an effort to combine Yale's monopoly of collegiate education with the Medical Society's monopoly of medical training and licensing.[97]

By 1810, however, the political climate had entirely changed. Jefferson's Embargo, which closed off New England's trade with the belligerents in the Napoleonic Wars, had caused a massive economic dislocation. Thousands were unemployed' ships rotted at their wharves. Jeffersonianism in New England was undone. From their high of 75 seats (39.1%) in the General Assembly in 1807, the Jeffersonians held only

---

[97] Although the Federalists were nominally in the majority in the General Assembly, it is unclear how firm their strength really was. Many who voted Federalist were Episcopalians who, though conservative in their politics, resented Yale's firm opposition to the establishment of an Episcopal College in Connecticut. Many Congregationalists had reason to resent the high-handedness of the established church. Dwight may have had good reason to fear a coalition of these groups--for it was precisely this combination that brought down the Standing Order in 1818.

42 seats (21.8%) by the spring of 1810.[98] By the fall of 1811, only 36 seats (18.8%) were held by Jeffersonians.[99]

The situation was favorable to the College. In the autumn of 1810, the proposed Artciles were approved by the Corporation and sent on to the General Assembly. The petition was granted--and the school opened its doors in the fall of 1813. A year later, the legislature granted the Medical Institution $30,000--a bonus on the chartering of the Phenix Bank of Hartford.

Medical Education had come to Yale. The College had made its first substantial step in expanding its functions beyond its traditional mission of undergraduate education. But it had not happened simply because it was a "good idea", because of the "spirit of the Enlightenment", or because it would upgrade the quality of medical practice. Indeed, medical knowledge and technique were so primitive in 1810 that there is no reason to believe that the course of study offered at Yale was superior in any way to the training that could have been received under the private tutelage of Jared Potter of Wallingford, Samuel Woodward of Torrington, or William Brenton Hall of Middletown.

Nor did physicians as a group benefit substantially from the establishment of the Medical Institution. While it may have enhanced the prestige of the profession, power was decisively shifted from the country doctors who delivered the bulk of medical services in the state, to an urban professional elite which, through its connections to political

---

[98] Purcell, op. cit., 176,180.

[99] Ibid., 180-181.

and financial power, could set priorities and standards for the whole profession. Ultimately, however, even the power of this elite was limited--for it governed not by virtue of its medical preeminence, but by virtue of its connection to a broader group of laymen and clergy.

The group that gained the most from the establishment of the Medical Institution--at least in the short run--was the Standing Order. In wresting control of the Medical Society from the Jeffersonians and in allying the elite of the profession with the College, Yale and its Federalist friends succeeded in stemming the tide of political and religious heterodoxy. But it was a temporary victory. Like the Act of Union of 1792 that linked Yale to the State, the Articles connecting Yale to the Medical Society were based on an unstable alliance between a declining clergy and a new group of politically ambitious merchants and professionals. As much as Timothy Dwight might strive to forge the educated, orthodox, and the well-to-do into a unified group exercising stewardship over the spiritual and temporal activities of the citizens of the Land of Steady Habits, College, State, and Church were moving inexorably in different directions.

The arrogance of the Federalist-Congregationalist clique in the Standing Order after 1812, alienated more and more Episcopalians. They had been continually discriminated against by the Congregationalists: their efforts to establish an Episcopal college had been blocked since the early 1790s--as Yale strove to maintain its monopoly of higher education in the state; efforts by Episcopal businessmen to obtain charters for banks which would compete with Congregationalist-controlled banks were repeatedly frustrated; and their resentment at being forced

to accept second class religious citizenship, to publically file with the town clerks as dissenters, had been a long-standing grievance.[100] Only their basic social conservatism and their sympathy with the pro-British stance of Federalist foreign policy had kept them in the Federalist political coalition. But after 1812, there was a wholesale defection of Episcopalians to a new party--the Tolerationist Party--which unified them with other dissident groups, Jeffersonians, Baptists, Methodists, and discontented Congregationalists. This new political combination would destroy the Standing Order, rewriting the state's constitution and disestablishing the church.

1818 was a watershed year. If Yale's evolution from college to university in earlier decades had been motivated by an effort to conserve an organic unity of power and belief in the state, its development after 1818 was a response to the failure of that effort. Traditionally the College had depended on three sources of support--the state, the established church, and donations from benevolent strangers. The political revolution of 1818 radically altered that triad. Disestablished, the church could not be counted on to support Yale financially. The state, having been taken over by enemies of the Standing Order, could not be counted on to make grants to Yale. The College was cut adrift, forced to depend on the donations of benevolent strangers and the favor of the general public.

The College was not slow to recognize its situation. President Dwight had died in 1817, as his political enemies were becoming

---

[100] Purcell, op. cit., 33-34.

ascendant. The Corporation acted immediately to adjust to the new circumstances:[101]

> The Corporation, feeling deeply sensible of the loss of President Dwight, and being fully aware of the fact, that the character of the College was, in public estimation, very intimately blended with his reputation, wisely resolved to amplify the advantages of the institution, by increasing the number of Professorships, and thus strengthening their claims on a continuance of favor and confidence.

A professorship of rhetoric and oratory was established in 1817. In 1822, the professorship of divinity was made the nucleus of a new department, the Theological Department, whose primary purpose was post-graduate education.[102] By 1826, appointments were made in modern languages--French and Spanish--and assistant professorships were created in the natural sciences. In the same year, permanent instruction in the law began to be offered in the College. As Baldwin suggests, this elaboration of the curriculum was directly related to Yale's new and enforced dependence on the public's "favor and confidence"--a dependence that had resulted from the disestablishment of the church and the dismantling of the Standing Order.

If Yale was forced to expand its curriculum in order to compete for the tuitions and fees of "strangers", it was also forced to turn to

---

[101] Ebenezer Baldwin, op. cit., 155-156.

[102] Ibid., 222-23, 231-32. By 1824, the Theological Department was a true divinity school, as extensive in its staffing as the Medical Institution. The new school boasted three professorships--Sacred Theology, Didactic Theology, and Sacred Literature--supplemented by the professorship of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages created in 1805. Its admissions standards were basically those of a graduate school--requiring a "liberal education at some college, unless the candidate have otherwise qualified himself for pursuing advantageously the prescribed course of studies."

the general public, to "benevolent strangers," for bulding up its capital base. In 1818, the College made its first attempt at general fund raising--hoping to create endowments for new professorships.[103] The drive was unsuccessful, since the College had only the vaguest idea of who could be counted on for support. Efforts in 1822 to raise funds for the Theological Department were more successful, resulting in $38,372 in donations.[104] The College also attempted to increase its prosperity by following the Boston model of investing heavily in local commerical ventures.[105] Had this succeeded, Yale might have devised a functional equivalent to the Standing Order--a linkage of the fortunes of the political and economic leaders of New Haven. The strategy failed disasterously when the Eagle Bank, in which Yale had invested over half of its endowment and which was run by Yale's Treasurer James Hillhouse and various in-laws of President Dwight, was engulfed in the

---

[103] Jeremiah Day, et al., "The Funds of Yale College" in Treasurer's Papers, Yale University Archives. See also James L. Kingsley, "Remarks on the Present Situation of Yale College; for its Friends and Patrons" (New Haven: 1818); Baldwin, op. cit., 316-319.

[104] Ibid., 316-319; Kelley, op. cit., 145-146.

[105] Harvard's financial prosperity had been achieved by a unity of the commerical and cultural elites of eastern Massachusetts--by what amounted to a functional equivalent of the Standing Order. Rather than being based on statute law, the Federalist hegemony of Boston was based on its control of capital--a control that was achieved in large part through the use of charitable endowments as commercial capital. See P. D. Hall, "The Model of Boston Charity" in Science and Society XXXVIII, 4 (1974-75), and "Veritas et Pecunia: The Historical Economy of Education," in History of Education Quarterly, Winter 1974-75.

Panic of 1826.[106] Facing financial collapse and beset with lawsuits from Congregational churches which had entrusted their funds to the College for investment, Yale finally turned to an entirely new constituency of support--its own alumni.

The alumni, although concentrated in Connecticut, were by the 1820s a nationally dispersed group. Many were major figures in the commercial and legal communities of New York, Albany, Philadelphia, Charleston, and New Orleans. It was through their donations to the Centum Milia fund drive of 1831-32 that Yale finally achieved financial autonomy. Although it would be forty years until alumni would topple the clergy from their monopoly of the Yale Corporation, once the school became dependent on them for their sons, their dollars, and their good-will, it was only a matter of time before they would dominate policymaking in the institution.

This paper must conclude by suggesting that the problem of the transformation of American higher education from college to university

---

106 On the Eagle Bank and its failure, see: E. E. Atwater, History of the City of New Haven (New York: 1887), 335; W. F. Hasse, Money and Banking in Connecticut (New Haven: 1957), 12-13; Rollin Osterweis, Three Centuries of New Haven (New Haven: 1953), 259; Catlin vs. Eagle Bank, 6 Conn. 233 (1826); Dexter, op. cit., V, 443-445. The Treasurer's Correspondence in the Yale University Archives gives the most complete picture of Yale's connection to the Eagle Bank. The Eagle Bank was, for all practical purposes, a Dwight family bank--and through it was tied into Yale College. The three founders of the bank--Eli Whitney, James Hillhouse, and William W. Woolsey--were all closely connected to the Dwight family. Eli Whitney married Henrietta Francis Edwards, President Dwight's first cousin. James Hillhouse was married to Sarah Lloyd Woolsey, first-cousin to President Dwight's wife, Mary Woolsey. William W. Woolsey was Dwight's brother-in-law through his marriage to Dwight's sister, Elizabeth Dwight and through Dwight's marriage to his sister, Mary Woolsey. President of the Eagle Bank at the time of its failure was George Hoadley, husband of Mary Anne Woolsey who was the daughter of William W. Woolsey and neice of President Dwight. See B. W. Dwight, op. cit., 1040-1043.

and the matter of medical training in the university are not issues that can be easily dealt with. Neither the development of the colleges nor the professionalization of medicine can, in the context of early American history, be subject to simple, unitary, comprehensive explanations. Underlying changes that appear very similar are, motives and constituencies that are very dissimilar: where Harvard becomes a university through the cooperation of a secularized clergy and laity, Yale's development appears to be governed by efforts of the clergy to resist the forces of secularization. In neither case does the matter of institutional modelling appear to be of very great importance--neither the English nor the Continental models were dominant. The university grew out of older institutions in a piecemeal fashion, according to the diverse needs of admimistrators, trustees, and faculty, and their constituencies within and without the walls of their institutions. The result was a unique product--a comprehensive educational organization governed by laymen, supported by private benevolence, and having little or no direct accountability to the general public or to the state.

The historical problems posed by Harvard and Yale are microcosms of the broader issues of American social, economic, and institutional development. It is hoped that this paper, in showing the complexity of institutional changes in two New England institutions of the early national period, has pointed out the utility--if not the necessity--of approaching institutional change in general from the premise that formal organizations are not merely "part of" society, but are inextricably bound to it. And that, as a result, understanding the form and function of institutions--colleges, libraries, museums, hospitals, and for-profit corporations--must involve analyses of a broad range of seemingly unrelated phenomena--families, kinship networks, values, manners, and habits.

Appendix

A Note on Sources

Information on the members and actions of the Connecticut Medical Society have proved to be very elusive. The Society has no records covering its early history beyond the printed proceedings of its twice-yearly conventions. And these do not record the votes or attitudes of particular Fellows. The personal papers of members of the Society are either lost or are hidden in private collections. The only easily accessible body of papers of a medical leader of this period is the collection of Cogswell papers--which are at the Connecticut State Historical Society in Hartford and in the University Archives at Yale. Also useful was an account book belonging to William Brenton Hall for the years 1807-1809 in the collection of the author. The fact that most of Hall's patients were either known Jeffersonians or members of dissenting religious sects, while the Federalists in Middletown were treated by the Federalist physicians Elisha Tracy and John Osborne, was suggestive of the relation between politics and religion in Connecticut and factions within the medical profession.

Material on Connecticut politics is as fugitive as data on physicians. Party organizations were secret in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Even establishing the political attitudes of members of the General Assembly is very difficult--for the Assembly only occasionally recorded the role of votes on particular measures. I was, as a result, forced to depend on four sources to obtain data on the party membership of office-holding physicians: 1) the lists of Justices of the Peace and recorded votes in the published Records of the State of Connecticut; 2) county and town histories containing records of church membership, political activity, and professional life; 3) occasionally essays on early Connecticut physicians and obituaries in the Connecticut State Medical Society Proceedings; and 4) F. B. Dexter's Yale Annals and Biographies. The quality of information on politics and religion varied widely within and between these sources.

Perhaps the greatest problem of all for researchers on the prehistory of the Yale Medical School and on early Connecticut politics is

the absence of any substantial body of Timothy Dwight papers. Since Dwight was the central figure of Connecticut Federalism and the prime move behind the Medical School, the loss of his papers renders any attempt to make definitive statements about politics and medicine impossible.

Because of the fragmentary nature of manuscript evidence, I was forced to base much of my understanding of politics and medicine on an analysis of the political, educational, and religious characteristics of the 96 Fellows of the Medical Society who served between 1800 and 1812. I have only been able to account for the affiliations of 33 of the 96. Although the sample is distressingly small, it does include most of the officers and committee-members of the Society during the period under consideration.

	Urban	Congregational	Episcopal	Other	Yale Grads	Total
Federalists	12 (50.0%)	20 (83.3%)	3 (12.5%)	1 (4.1%)	13 (54.2%)	24
Jeffersonians	3 (33.3%)	1 (11.1%)	2 (22.2%)	6 (66.75)	6 (66.7%)	9

N = 33

Neither residence nor education appear to differ significantly between Federalist and Jeffersonian Fellows of the Medical Society. The Federalists show a slightly greater tendency to come from urban areas--a fact which is consistent with their interest in functional specificity. Interesting in this regard is the fact that the Presidents of the Society while it was under Jeffersonian control (1801-1807), James Potter, Jeremiah West, and Thomas Moseley, were Federalists from small villages. Their interest in specialized medical practice may well have been less pronounced than that of their urban compeers--and they may, on the basis of their knowledge of the difficulties faced by country doctors, actually opposed the medical school and other efforts to restrict the scope of

physicians' actions to medical practice. Religion is unquestionably the most important characteristic differentiating the Fellows of the Medical Society. Since most of the Jeffersonians were either members of dissenting sects or non-believers, it is hardly surprising that they opposed the effort to center medical training at Yale, a citadel of religious orthodoxy.

INSTITUTION FOR SOCIAL AND POLICY STUDIES

The mission of the Institution for Social and Policy Studies (ISPS) is to encourage and undertake multidisciplinary research and education. The ISPS is oriented to the exploration of social problems rather than to the refinement of discipline-based methodology. In recent years, ISPS research has focused on the problems of the city, education, health service delivery, and on the modeling of social systems. Currently, research is also being developed on criminal justice, governmental reform, environment, income distribution, aging, the policy-making process, and value problems in public policy. ISPS is not a consulting organization but an instrument for enriching the social sciences and related disciplines in the University.

Institution for Social and Policy Studies
16A Yale Station (111 Prospect Street)
New Haven, Connecticut 06520